

Coping with Loss Following a Breakup

Objective

To identify the losses you experienced following a breakup and identify ways to cope.

What to Know

A deep sense of loss after a breakup is common because many aspects of your life have changed. Perhaps you did not realize the extent of the losses, or how deeply you would feel them. In addition to the loss of the relationship, perhaps you have lost some or all the following:

- companionship
- friendships you shared as a couple
- your ex's extended family
- financial stability
- your standard of living
- intimacy and affection
- time with your children
- your home
- your identity
- the hopes and dreams you had for the relationship

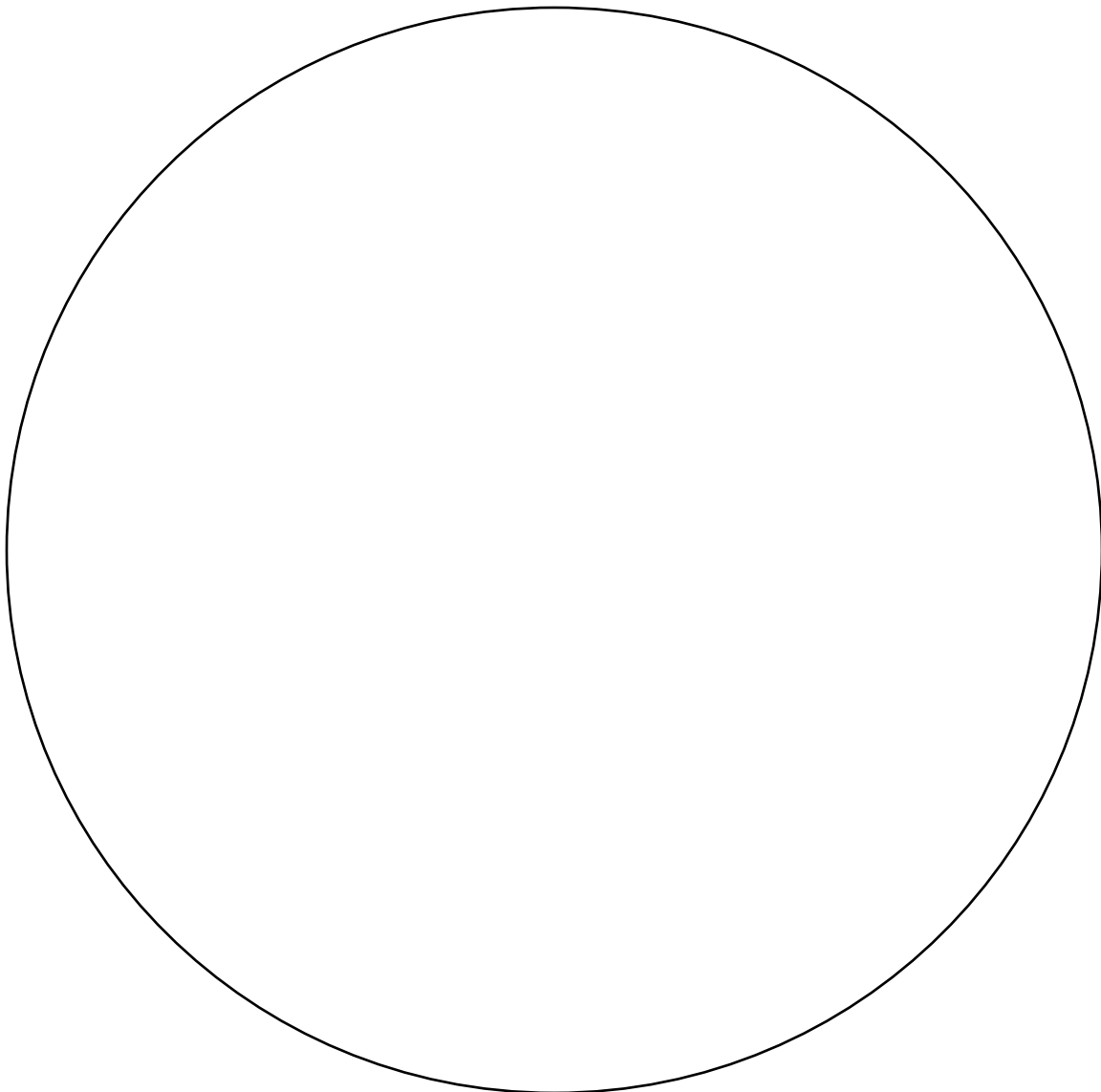
All these losses can be hard to overcome and may contribute to feelings of sadness, hopelessness about the future, and even depression. You might think that ignoring these losses and focusing on other things will help you cope. Unfortunately, even though denial might help temporarily, over the long-term unacknowledged losses can interfere with your happiness and ability to move forward.

This worksheet will help you reflect on your losses following a breakup and identify some ways to cope.

What to Do

First, write down all the things you have lost because of the breakup.

Now, use the circle below to illustrate your losses. Draw lines in the circle and label each section with the type of loss it represents. The larger sections indicate especially painful losses. The smaller sections are for less painful losses.



What are the top two areas you feel the most loss?

1. _____
2. _____

Here are some ways you can cope with your losses.

- 1. Take time to grieve.** There is no shame in getting in touch with your sadness over the end of an important relationship.
- 2. Practice self-compassion.** Avoid self-blame, guilt, and other unproductive negative thought patterns.
- 3. Take good care of yourself.** Adopt healthy habits like getting enough rest, eating nutritious meals, and exercising at least five days/week.
- 4. Rely on people you trust for support.** Reach out to friends, family members, a therapist, a relationship coach, or your religious community.
- 5. Join a divorce or breakup support group.** Tap into community resources or find a group online.
- 6. Write about your feelings.** Take time each day to write in your journal.
- 7. Pursue a hobby or develop new interests.** You might not feel like meeting new people or joining a club, but socializing can reduce your sense of isolation and loneliness.
- 8. If you were forced to move, make your new place feel like home.** Increase your comfort with photos and other personal possessions. Give yourself time to settle in, meet your new neighbors, and get to know your community.

What are some other ways you can cope? _____

Choose at least two of the above activities to try for at least two weeks. What will you do?

1. _____
2. _____

Now, use the chart on the following page to record what you do to cope with your losses. Try to do something every day, even if it is reaching out to a friend. Write down the date, what you did, how you felt afterwards, and any notes (for example, if you will do the activity again).

Who is supporting you during this difficult time? Has it been helpful? Why or why not?

What else can you do to cope with your losses?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
