

RELATIONSHIP LOSS INFO SHEET



About loss

It is normal and healthy to need loving bonds with special people in our worlds. We all function best and meet life's challenges when we are safely connected to those who matter most. We can be stronger and more resilient when we know that one or two special others have our back and are there to turn to when life gets curly.

It hurts to lose a close relationship and it takes time to process this loss.

Healthy Grieving

Coping with the loss of an important relationship involves two important emotional processes at once:

1. Turning up the heat in some areas, and,
2. Turning down the heat in others.

It helps to think of the "work" of grief as involving two important tasks. The first is the **emotional work** of processing the loss. The other equally important task of grieving is the **practical work** of coping with day-to-day life and adjusting the practical aspects of your life to the loss.

Healthy grief is thought to balance these two tasks. Moving flexibly between them then allows emotions to be attended to, and life-transitioning to be accomplished.

FOUR PHASES OF SEPARATION & LOSS

BY JOHN BOWLBY

01

Numbing

In the early stages of loss, it is normal to feel distant from your feelings or even numb. This is adaptive because it allows you to gradually encounter your emotions without being flooded by them all at once. Trust the process and give yourself time to take in the magnitude of this loss.

02

Yearning & Searching

Also known as *protest*, this phase is all about searching for answers and attempting to restore the lost relationship, if possible. You might find yourself preoccupied with feelings and thoughts about the other and what went wrong as you struggle to make sense of this loss.

03

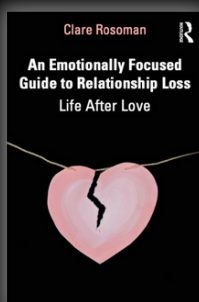
Disorganisation & Despair

As you take in the reality of the loss and the futility of searching for answers, you might find that you sink into despair, depression, and dependency. With this acceptance comes utter disorganisation as you question who you are and you question the future you had imagined.

04

Reorganisation & Detachment

In this final phase, you are now able to redefine the other in your mind and to no longer turn to them for your attachment needs. You are able to build other healthy bonds and let go of the lost relationship. You can move forward in your life.



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Information from *An Emotionally Focused Guide to Relationship Loss: Life After Love*
by Dr Clare Rosoman

