A THERAPIST'S GUIDE TO COPING WITH A BREAKUP ON VALENTINE'S DAY

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With Valentine's Day painted as a celebration of love and connection, those spending the day alone after a breakup might be faced with feelings of loneliness, sadness, or even anger. If you're dreading Valentine's Day or finding it difficult to cope, remember that you're not alone and you can rewrite the script. This is an opportunity to reclaim your own narrative and focus on you.

'As a therapist, I have helped many people overcome heartbreak, including myself,' says Malminder Gill, celebrity hypnotherapist. 'It can be a challenging period in our lives, but we can navigate these feelings with strategies that build self-compassion and emotional resilience.'

Reframe Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day doesn't have to be limited to romantic love. Consider this as an opportunity to celebrate other forms of love—self-love or appreciation of friends and family. On any given day, you are in control of honouring what is important to you and your needs.

Actionable Strategy: Plan a self-care day filled with activities you enjoy. Watch your favourite film, cook a comforting meal, or indulge in a spa day. Make the day about celebrating you.

Acknowledge Your Feelings

It's natural to feel a mix of emotions after a breakup—grief, nostalgia, frustration, or sadness. Ignoring and suppressing these feelings often prolongs the healing process. Instead, give yourself permission to stop and feel all the emotions. Journal your feelings or simply sit with your emotions and allow them to be expressed within your body. Let out whatever comes up.

Actionable Strategy: Set a timer for 15 minutes. Write a letter to yourself expressing how you feel and then throw it away. It doesn't need to be perfect or even make sense–let it flow naturally. The goal is to let your emotions out in a safe, expressive manner.

Remember, Healing Takes Time

Breakups are a form of loss, and like any loss, they require time to heal. Be patient with yourself. Valentine's Day is just one day, and it doesn't define your worth or future happiness.

Actionable Strategy: Celebrate small wins, like going a day without thinking about your ex or discovering a new hobby that brings you joy. If it helps you see the bigger picture, write these wins down to track your progress.

Limit Social Media Use

Scrolling through social media and seeing posts of happy couples or your ex can be triggering. What we see on social media often presents a filtered version of reality, and comparing yourself to others' curated lives can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy or sadness.

Actionable Strategy: Take a break from social media for the day. Remove the apps from your phone temporarily or even put your phone and computer away for the day and instead focus on being present with yourself or others.

Connect with Supportive People

To combat loneliness, reach out to friends or family who can offer comfort and distraction. Spending time with people who care about you can remind you that you're not alone and that love exists in many forms.

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Actionable Strategy: Organise a celebration of friends. Gather your close friends for a fun evening, whether it's a film night or a shared meal.

Shift to Gratitude

Shifting your focus to what you have rather than what you've lost can help reframe negative thoughts. Having gratitude for things around you can foster a sense of hope and resilience.

Actionable Strategy: Write down three things you're grateful for each day. They can be as simple as having water to drink, the sunshine, or the support of a good friend. Then, close your eyes, place your hands over your heart and feel the gratitude rise within your body as you give thanks for these things.

Seek Professional Support

If feelings of sadness or hopelessness persist despite your best efforts, consider reaching out to a therapist or counsellor. They can provide a safe space to explore your emotions and equip you with tools to heal and move forward.

Actionable Strategy: Research mental health providers or online therapy options. Sometimes, just taking the action of seeking help can bring immediate relief knowing someone is there to support you.

If you're healing from a breakup, think of Valentine's Day as an opportunity to practice self-love and focus on your personal growth. By prioritising your well-being and taking steps to nurture your mental health, you can embrace this day with strength and confidence. Putting yourself first is empowering. You are deserving of love, most especially from yourself.

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