

# Dealing with a breakup

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No one likes to end a relationship. But for a teenager, the end of a relationship — particularly a first love — can seem like the end of the world.

Although some adults have the tendency to pass off a teenage love affair as trivial, to the teenager the emotions involved can be just as strong as those adults feel.

According to Jack Knight, a psychotherapist, reactions can range from acceptance or anger to "depression, grief, hurt or rejection. The person's life has gone from being totally preoccupied with somebody, to not there."

There can also be physical reactions involved in ending a relationship. Parents, he said, should look for things like their child having trouble sleeping, eating, concentrating, a loss of energy, inability to remember simple things, isolating themselves, drinking or doing

drugs.

By knowing what is going on in their kids' relationships, parents can be more sympathetic to emotional upsets.

However, most teens do not feel their parents can be of much help after a breakup.

"I think when you break-up with a guy you need your friends' support more than your parents," said 19-year-old Heather (not her real name).

"Because your parents will be like, 'There's more fish in the sea', but your friends understand more because they've seen you with that person and they know what your relationship was like more than your parents do. So I just think they can support you better."

Many teens feel that friends are more sympathetic to their situation and will know what it takes to make them feel better.

Brian (not his real name), 22, said friends are best at helping you deal with

breakups because "they take you out places to help you get over it."

While getting over a relationship takes time and the support of friends and loved ones, some people find it harder to get over breakups than others and become fixated on their ex.

Knight said that some degree of obsession is normal at the end of a relationship.

"They're preoccupied with what the person's doing. When they're going out, when their light turns off. They'd be outside maybe watching, or they'd be phoning them a dozen times a day, talking with their peer group about what Sally's doing, what John's doing, is he going out with anyone? Within a range, that is a normal response to a breakup."

However, when people begin threatening their ex or making their life uncomfortable, it may be time to seek help from someone like a parent, teacher or in serious cases, the police.

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