COLLECTION

The Essentials of Applied Psychology

My Ex Moved On. I Haven't.

Coping with an ex's new relationship, comparison, and social media checking

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Grief, Letting Go, and Rebirth

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Crisis resources

If you are going through a crisis and suicidal ideation comes to you, please do not face it alone.

- 988 — 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Call or text, 24/7, free and confidential (US and Canada).
- 741741 — Crisis Text Line. Text HOME to 741741 to reach a trained crisis counselor.
- 116 123 — Samaritans, free, 24/7 (UK and Ireland).
- 911 — in case of immediate danger (US and Canada).

These numbers apply to the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Wherever you are, findahelpline.com lists helplines country by country.

To all those who, on an ordinary morning, discovered that their ex had turned the page — and who believed, for a fleeting moment, that the world had stopped turning. You will get through this ordeal. And you will emerge transformed.

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Introduction — When the Ground Gives Way a Second Time

There are pains for which no one prepares you.

You are warned that the breakup will be hard. Your friends tell you that "time heals all wounds." Your family encourages you to "move on." And little by little, painstakingly, you begin to rebuild. You relearn how to sleep alone in a bed that feels too large. You get used to the silence of the apartment on Sunday mornings. You stop checking your phone every five minutes, hoping for a message that will never come.

Then one day — perhaps through a mutual friend, perhaps through a photo on social media, perhaps through an awkward message from your ex — you learn the news.

Your ex is in a new relationship.

And everything crumbles again.

What you thought you had rebuilt shatters into pieces. The walls you had patiently erected begin to crack. The pain you believed you had tamed returns with a violence you had not anticipated. And the most bewildering part, perhaps, is that you do not even understand why it hurts so much. After all, it is over between you. You know that. You have accepted it — or at least, that is what you thought.

So why this feeling of betrayal? Why this lump in your throat? Why this irrepressible urge to scour social media for details you know perfectly well you do not want to know?

A Pain Without a Name

In our society, there is no word to precisely describe what you are going through. People speak of jealousy, but that is not quite it. They mention nostalgia, but it runs deeper. They refer to grief, but your ex is not dead — quite the contrary, he or she seems to be thriving with someone else, and that is precisely what makes the situation unbearable.

Psychologist Guy Winch, in his book How to Fix a Broken Heart (2018), describes this experience as a "compound emotional wound": the pain of the initial loss, multiplied by the confrontation with tangible proof that the other person has moved on without you. This is not simply a relapse into the sorrow of the breakup. It is a wound of an entirely new kind, possessing its own characteristics, its own mechanisms, and, fortunately, its own paths to healing.

What This Book Is Not

Before going further, allow me to clarify something essential.

This book is not a guide to "winning your ex back." Nor is it a self-help manual that will promise you that "everything happens for a reason" or that "the universe has something better in store for you." These phrases, however well-intentioned, have the unfortunate tendency to invalidate a suffering that deserves to be acknowledged in all its complexity.

This book is not a prosecution of your ex, either. Your former partner has every right to start a new life. That is a fact. Your pain takes nothing away from that right, and that right takes nothing away from your pain. Both can coexist.

What This Book Is

This book is an honest, evidence-based, and compassionate exploration of what you are going through. It draws on research in clinical psychology, affective neuroscience, and attachment theory to help you understand why this news affects you so deeply, and above all, how to navigate this ordeal and emerge from it not "the same as before," but transformed — in the best sense of the word.

Each chapter combines scientific insights, case studies inspired by real situations, and practical exercises that you can complete at your own pace. There is no set order. You may read this book from cover to cover, or skip directly to the chapter that best corresponds to what you are experiencing right now.

The Structure of Our Journey Together

The first part — the one you now hold in your hands — is titled "Understanding the Storm." It is devoted to analyzing what happens within you when you learn that your ex is in a new relationship. We will explore why this information provokes such

acute pain (Chapter 1), how it reactivates a grieving process you thought was complete (Chapter 2), the cognitive traps into which your mind falls almost inevitably (Chapter 3), and the devastating impact of digital surveillance on your recovery (Chapter 4).

The second part, "Walking Through the Pain," will guide you through the concrete management of the emotions that overwhelm you, the rebuilding of your self-esteem, and the learning of forgiveness — not as a gift to the other, but as an act of personal liberation.

The third part, "Rebirth," will open the doors to what comes next: the redefinition of your identity, the possibility of loving again, and that day — which will come, I promise you — when this story will no longer be an open wound, but a scar you can speak of with serenity.

A Personal Note

If I am writing this book, it is not from an academic ivory tower. Over my years of practice, I have met dozens of people facing this specific situation. Men and women of all ages, from all walks of life, who shared the same bewilderment at the intensity of their own reaction. "I didn't think it would hurt this much," they almost all told me, with a hint of shame in their voice, as if feeling this pain were an admission of weakness.

It is not a weakness. It is proof that you loved sincerely, that you invested in a relationship with everything you are, and that the end of that relationship — including its symbolic "second ending" when the other person moves on — deserves to be experienced and processed with all the care it requires.

You are not weak. You are not pathetic. You are not "behind" your ex. You are not "stuck in the past." You are simply human — a human being facing one of the most intense emotional experiences life can offer — and that is exactly where healing begins. From that raw, vulnerable, and magnificent humanity that makes you who you are.

How to Use This Book

A few practical suggestions before we begin.

First, get yourself a dedicated notebook. Not a digital document — a physical

notebook that you can touch, leaf through, carry with you. The exercises in this book are designed to be written by hand, because handwriting engages the brain differently than typing. The work of neuroscientist Karin James, at Indiana University, has shown that handwriting activates brain circuits associated with memory and emotional processing in ways that keyboard typing does not replicate (James & Engelhardt, 2012). In the context of therapeutic self-work, this difference is not trivial.

Second, do not impose a reading pace on yourself. This book is not a mystery novel whose ending you need to reach. Each chapter is designed to be digested slowly, reread if necessary, and put into practice before moving on to the next. If a chapter overwhelms you — and it is likely that some will — set the book down. Give yourself time to feel what is rising. Then come back when you are ready.

Third, do not hesitate to skip a chapter if its content does not match your current experience. This book is a buffet, not a fixed menu. Take what you need, when you need it.

Finally, if at any point during this reading you feel that your distress exceeds what you can manage alone, do not hesitate to seek professional support. A psychologist, a psychotherapist, a psychiatrist — mental health professionals are trained to support you during these difficult moments, and reaching out to them is not a sign of weakness, but of clarity and courage.

Let us begin.