



The Breakup Bible: The Smart Woman's Guide to Healing from a Breakup or Divorce

By Rachel Sussman

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In *The Breakup Bible*, psychotherapist and breakup expert Rachel Sussman reveals the secrets every woman needs to get her life back on track. Drawing on hundreds of counseling sessions she's conducted with women at all stages of recovery, Sussman developed a proven 3-phase process for healing from a breakup. *The Breakup Bible* takes women through Healing, Understanding, and Transformation, with new perspectives and advice from real, healed women at each step. Sussman's plan for getting over the end of a relationship is revolutionary and sound, complete with steps for creating a personalized Love Map, a vital and groundbreaking tool for moving on after a breakup.

The Breakup Bible proves that it is possible to not only survive a breakup, but to emerge from one as an even stronger, empowered woman.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Review

“It’s not the Bible you swear on, but many an ex-wife may find herself swearing by *The Breakup Bible*.”— **Chicago Tribune**

“Must-read advice for those going through a breakup or divorce.”— **YourTango.com**

"*The Breakup Bible* is here to get you back on your feet." --**You Beauty.com**

"[Sussman's] book shows that it’s not only possible to survive a breakup, but that you can emerge even stronger and empowered." -- **genConnect.com**

About the Author

Rachel A. Sussman, LCSW, is a licensed psychotherapist, writer, and lecturer. As the founder of Sussman Counseling, a psychotherapy practice devoted to treating couples and individuals with relationship dilemmas, Sussman has counseled patients in all phases of dating, marriage, and breakups for over a decade. Ms. Sussman lives in New York City with her husband and daughter. Visit her online at www.rachelasussman.com.

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A Room of One’s Own

Finding Comfort in the Early Stages of Grief

“The first months after our breakup are still a blur to me. I was in terrible shape. I could barely get out of bed. I missed work. I was in shock at first. I kept thinking that it was a huge mistake, and he would come to his senses and come back to me. When he didn’t, I was completely devastated. I didn’t know if I was coming or going. I was an absolute wreck. It was an awful moment in time, but it’s way behind me now.”--Gia

A Window into Your Soul--Assessing the Damage

The breaking apart of a romantic relationship is an extraordinarily painful event, whether you’ve been dating for a year or married for thirty. Even if you initiated your split, you are going to be overcome with interminable sorrow. You are not only mourning the loss of someone significant in your life, but saying farewell to your dreams of an eternity together.

The first weeks and months tend to be the most treacherous in the road to recovery. Pervasive grief invades your existence. You question everything, including your self-worth, your choices, your career, your friendships--everything. Numerous thoughts, feelings, and emotions run through your brain. The majority of

the women I interviewed had at least half of the following experiences:

- * You're in shock--unable to comprehend why your relationship ended, or feeling as if it can't be happening to you. You feel devoid of feelings, numb and detached.
- * You wonder if you can ever trust again, if the pain will ever subside, and if you will ever feel joy or happiness again.
- * Depression and despondency permeate your body and soul. You feel hopeless, helpless, unable to cope. Your self-esteem is shot. You have lost your ability to concentrate and feel ill equipped to make decisions.
- * You have anxiety and anxiety attacks as early stage symptoms. You feel paralyzed with fear and dread, unable to sit still. You tremble and shake, have heart palpitations and trouble breathing.
- * You understand intellectually that your relationship is over, but you cannot accept it emotionally. Some days you are convinced you can salvage it, or that in time your partner will return.
- * You are unable to control your emotions. You can't contain yourself. You cry or rant constantly and call friends obsessively.
- * You feel embarrassed that your relationship ended. You're ashamed to tell anyone and you feel humiliated.
- * You contact your ex repetitively via phone, e-mails, texts, or Facebook. Or you may find yourself glued to your telephone, waiting for it to ring.
- * If you are ending a marriage, you have the lengthy process of divorce to consider. You feel incredibly overwhelmed thinking about what you'll do and how to divide the life you and your ex have accrued.
- * You are obsessed about your breakup. These thoughts intrude most of your day, and you dream about your ex at night. You re-create and dissect the last moments, weeks, and months, again and again. The final conversation loops through your brain repetitively.
- * If you have children, you worry about how they will handle the separation and feel guilt ridden that you have imposed psychological damage on them. You feel too inundated to deal with parenting.
- * You are filled with self-blame, self-loathing, doubt, and regret. You're convinced that you blew it. You think, "If I were only a better partner. If I were more loving, giving, attentive. If I only did this better. If only??.?.?"
- * You are filled with rage. You have huge, uncontrollable outbursts of anger.
- * If your ex supported you, or carried part of your financial load, you are frightened about finances.
- * If your relationship ended over your partner's affair, your healing is even more complicated. You feel completely betrayed, blindsided, shaken, and shocked. Your sense of justice, order, and good in the world has evaporated.

- * You think that your final ship has sailed. Time is running out. You wonder if you'll ever meet someone again, if you'll be able to bear children.
- * You have trouble eating and sleeping. Weight loss and insomnia are quite common after a breakup. Or you eat too much and sleep excessively.
- * You feel unlucky, victimized, as if nothing ever works out quite right for you. You're steeped in self-pity.
- * You feel completely overwhelmed and "out of sorts." Food shopping, caring for your home, and washing your clothes seem like insurmountable tasks. Or, perhaps you have unending, manic energy. You've refolded every item in your closet and can't stop cleaning.
- * You may be filling up every single waking moment with plans, or sitting at home, completely isolated.

The Importance of Validating Your Feelings

Perhaps you recognize yourself in some of these statements. Or possibly you have experienced them all. Every single declaration represents the normal range of emotions that we experience after a separation. The first step that you must do on the road to recovery is to validate each emotion you are feeling as natural.

Let me take this opportunity to offer you my sincerest condolences over the sorrow that has befallen you. Breaking up is so incredibly difficult. What could possibly prepare you for this monumental heartache? I know it can feel all encompassing and very scary. I've been there, and so have millions of others.

You are now officially submerged in the early stages of breakup grief. Life has become a daily barrage of emotionally charged thoughts and feelings--uncharted territory for most. Many discuss feeling absolutely insane as they observe their moods swinging wildly back and forth like an out-of-whack pendulum. You are entering a whole new and frightening world. You are feeling and thinking things that are quite foreign to you.

It's very important to take the time to validate your feelings. It will allow you to see that you are right where you should be, which will help to ease the anguish you are experiencing.

Unfortunately, the validation you crave rarely comes from your ex, which can be extremely upsetting. We go through all sorts of machinations to try to get our partners to take responsibility, yet only a few do. And often friends and family members, although well meaning, cannot fully understand the gravity of your situation, which can be equally frustrating. The absence of having your experience acknowledged can make you feel even more alone. If you haven't found a way to validate yourself, it's important that you do so right now using this book and my words to enhance your healing. Please remember, you are allowed to feel what you feel. This is your essential right. It is OK that you feel miserable and it is absolutely necessary that you accept your grief. Validating yourself and feeling your feelings is a vital part of the healing process.

Taking Time to Grieve: Making Peace with Your Discomfort

"The first few months after my marriage ended were just horrific. I was extremely devastated yet kind of

numb. After that, the tears came. Rivers upon rivers of tears. Sadness of such depth, like I'd never experienced before. I hated the way I felt and went through all sorts of motions to try to escape. I finally realized that I needed to stop running and find a safe place to work with my emotions. Finding that place helped me survive."--Helene

"Immediately after my breakup I scheduled myself 24/7. I ran myself ragged trying to avoid my pain. That was a mistake and made me feel pretty depleted. Finally I slowed down, and that's when I started feeling better. I realized I needed time to grieve, time to clarify my situation. You must leave time for reflection--it's extremely important and very worthwhile."--Abby

In order to survive the early stages after a breakup, you have to make peace with your sorrow, and accept the realization that it's going to stick around for a while. I understand that the idea of patience and gradual healing is counterintuitive to most. Unless you are a naturally patient person (and most of us, including me, are not), practicing the art of tolerance is no easy feat. Our natural inclination toward suffering is to press the fast-forward button and get out of the experience as quickly as possible. But bucking up against how you are feeling right now will accomplish little. In fact it can backfire and make you feel even worse than you already do. It is important to try to master patience, and to realize that there are many valuable lessons for you to learn at this juncture. Your journey will be much more comfortable if you reconcile the fact that healing takes time and there are no shortcuts.

Often women in the early stages after a breakup or divorce say, "When will I feel better?" "Why aren't I feeling better?" "I hate feeling this way!"

These statements are completely valid. Does anyone ever enjoy suffering? Of course not. It's extremely uncomfortable. It is a good thing to eliminate unnecessary suffering, but breakup suffering is necessary--it's an important step on the road toward healing, understanding, and transformation.

Consider a spiritual response to suffering. According to the ancient Buddhist teachings, the way to end suffering is to follow a gradual path of self-improvement and enlightenment. Suffering will disappear when progress is made on the path. I think this philosophical approach makes a great deal of sense, and in time, you will too.

Although the heartache can feel insurmountable, I promise you that if you do the work to process the ending of your relationship correctly, over time, you will recover fully. Together we will navigate this rocky terrain and find healthy outlets for your pain. We will clarify your emotions, figure out why your relationship ended, gather useful tools, and crawl out of the hole. Although it may sound inconceivable today, it is highly probable that you will become your best possible self, healthier and happier than you could ever imagine.

Taking Care of Yourself

Most of us are not comfortable with the notion of taking care of ourselves. Women are hardwired to care for others before thinking of ourselves. Recently I attended a dear friend's milestone birthday celebration, which was for women only. During dinner the conversation turned to summer plans, and one woman announced that she was visiting a spa with her family. I commented that I thought it was a lovely idea and perhaps I would visit a spa in the future--on my own. A woman sitting next to me, whom I barely knew, replied, "Oh,

you'll never go!" Her comment intrigued me. She didn't know me, yet she was predicting that I wouldn't do what I just said I would. "Why would you say that?" I inquired. "Because you're a woman. You put your family first, you put your job first, you put everything ahead of taking care of yourself. This is what I do too. This is what we all do!"

Her words startled me, yet they were true. We are caregivers as opposed to caretakers, and there is a greater percentage of women than men in our country caring for children, spouses, and parents. We are programmed to go, go, go--putting the needs of our family, friends, and lovers way ahead of our own. In fact, many of us measure our self-worth by this selfless behavior.

I'm asking you to break the mold and find a way to put yourself first. To take care of yourself. To take your own nurturing seriously, even though it may initially feel very strange. Mark it off on your calendar and pick a time for a daily meeting with yourself--a daily comfort session. This is a gift to yourself that you deserve.

Creating a Comfort Zone

"After my divorce when I was very down, a friend suggested I find a photograph of myself at the happiest moment of my life, frame it, and put it someplace where I'd see it every day. My husband had just moved out and I decided to fix up my bedroom to be a sort of shrine to myself. I looked at this photo daily and remembered who I was when I was a happy person. Remind yourself that you can be that person again--you will be that person again. This worked for me and it can work for you."--Roberta

"The concept of taking care of myself was very new to me. I had to remind myself each day that it was my mission to allow myself to grieve. I turned my bedroom into a sanctuary. I immediately bought new bedding as a symbolic act--out with the old, in with the new. I didn't want any reminders of my ex. I used that room to relax, stay calm, sort through my feelings, and journal. I created a comfortable place where I could feel secure."--Sabrina

What I'd like you to do now is create "a room of your own." This room will be a safety zone while you pass through this complicated yet necessary stage in the healing process. Trust me, it will be incredibly beneficial to you: a secure place, complete with your imprint, where you can go to grieve on your own terms. Perhaps there is a place in your home--even a quiet corner of a room will do--that you can designate as your special place to experience comfort while mourning your loss. It doesn't matter which room you choose, but it must be someplace where you can create a sense of peace, harmony, and security.

I suggest using your bedroom, as I do when I need a serene place to escape to. Here are some ideas on how to create a calming atmosphere:

- * Burn aromatic candles or incense.
- * Use good mood lighting.
- * Get some stunning accent pillows.

- * Purchase some new bedding (especially if your ex slept in your bed). Many women I spoke with describe this as a must-do!
- * Play soft and soothing music.
- * Buy a white noise machine to mask unwanted sounds.
- * Add some beautiful flowers or plants.
- * Give the room a mini makeover--relocate furniture, repaint the walls, and consider new window treatments, paintings, photographs, or posters.

Once you have this room set up, find some time each day to spend there, basking in this newly created comfort. Many women report that while in their special place they take time to journal, read spiritual or motivational books, meditate, or watch movies. You can also do any hobbies you enjoy in this sanctuary.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Maria Antoine:

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Maureen Bonds:

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